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ABSTRACT

This presentation highlights and discusses the recommendations made by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration in its report "The Restructuring of a National Understanding of Requirements for Educational Leadership of the Future." The revamping of administrator preparation is said to be essential because current preparation is nearly irrelevant to practice and unresponsive to public demand for a more effective educational system. Three ideas in the report are cited as significant for reform of administrator education: (1) teachers are preeminent, and administrators' roles must change to grant teachers greater authority; (2) administrator preparation should be housed in professional schools rather than in colleges of arts and sciences; (3) preparation programs should be responsive to the concerns of both the profession and the university. Courses of study should therefore be organized around problems and principles of best practice rather than around academic and research specialties of sociologists and psychologists. The preparation program should take individuals from the theoretical study of learning, teaching, organizations, and people through clinical studies to guided practice, and ultimately to independent practice. Most of the recommended adjustments have to do with building and incorporating a knowledge base of administrative practice and formalizing rigorous clinical experiences as part of administrator preparation. (TE)

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Revamping the Preparation of School Administrators

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A Presentation to the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Conference
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In March of this year, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration issued its report calling for "The Restructuring of a National Understanding of Requirements for Educational Leadership of the Future." The reaction to this report, Leaders for America's Schools, has been mixed. Some have called the recommendations of the Commission sensible and timely. On the other hand, one critic labeled the report "not even old wine in new bottles; it is more like Mississippi river water in tin cans." (Gibboney, 1987). Regardless of the reaction to the Commission report, those who are familiar with educational administration are inclined to agree that the profession is in need of reform. My task today is to tell you something about the Commission recommendations and to highlight what I believe are thrusts in those recommendations.

Why is the revamping of administrator preparation necessary or desirable at this time? Because preparation is nearly irelevant to practice and unresponsive to public cries for a more effective educational system. Who is responsible for the near irrelevance of administrator preparation? There is not a single culprit we can point to, not a single villain responsible for the situation as it exists today. There is sufficient woe, and therefore sufficient blame, to be shared by all factions of our fragmented profession. Collectively, we share responsibility for permitting the evolution of a system for preparing school administrators that in fact, does not prepare school administrators or even screen them for much more than stamina.

It would seem that many of our difficulties grow out of our reluctance, perhaps a natural reluctance in a pluralistic society, to come to grips with some difficult and hard questions. The first of these has

to do with the general lack of agreement on the mission of the public schools. If we as a society are unclear about our expectations for the public schools, it is not surprising that school administrator preparation is unfocused. "Leadership and management to what end?" is a question that any of us would have difficulty answering with any specificity.

A second and related uncertainty has to do with the lack of agreement on the roles of school administrators, the school board, and the community which it serves. School administrators are put in the position of having to play multiple roles simultaneously for different audiences. While many school board members serve their community with distinction, there is little doubt that others use it as a political springboard, a place to rattle the cage of the last stronghold of democracy. Communities and community sub-groups also contribute to the uncertainty, both to the roles of administrators and the mission of the public schools.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that the university system for preparing school administrators has failed to provide the schools with intelligent, knowledgeable, dedicated and expert school administrators. It has failed because the university has tried to turn administrator preparation into preparation for scholarship. It has failed because the schools of education have not defined as their mission, the selection and preparation of expert managers and leaders for the public schools. It has failed because the preparation of administrators has not been a university activity supported with adequate funding. It has failed because ungenerous individuals seeking to be certified as school administrators have sought out inferior programs with open

admissions, requiring little or no work. It has failed because the university, the state, and practicing administrators have not worked together to build rigorous and relevant preservice preparation programs, taking candidates from the abstract issues of education, teaching, learning, and organizational life through clinical experience and mentored practice to independent practice. For these and many other reasons, it is absolutely necessary that the preparation of school administrators be revamped.

For my part, I earnestly believe that preservice school administrator preparation is very appropriately housed within the university. While it is not necessary for school administrators to be geniuses, as Daniel E. Griffiths, Chair of the National Commission has suggested, "there is no recorded example of a good stupid superintendent or an effective but dumb principal." People who are involved in leading and managing education should be intellectuals, people who love learning and for whom learning is a critical value in their lives. The university is the environment in which this love is fostered.

On the other hand, it is clear that the state and the profession itself have an important role in the preparation of school administrators. Sorting out what parts of preparation are most appropriately taken care of by the state and the profession should be an important part of our agenda for reform. Not only do we need to sort out who does what, but we also need to carefully coordinate these efforts.

While these criticisms may seem harsh to some, others understand that unless those of us in university-based preparation programs begin to take seriously the criticisms and concerns of the profession, we may see the disappearance of educational administration from the university

campus in a very few years. This indeed would be an American tragedy.

These concerns led the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) to establish the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration in 1985. Some might say this was an exercise in self interest. Clearly there is self interest involved. We needed to motivate faculty to give serious concern to the reform of those programs. Fourteen years ago, Roald Campbell and Jackson Newell published A Study of Professors of Educational Administration: Problems and Propects of an Applied Academic Field (1973). One of their observations was that a primary characteristic of professors of educational administration was complacence. This spring, a contemporary replication entitled, The Professoriate in Educational Administration (McCarthy, Kuh, Newell, and Iacona, 1987), reveals that complacence continues to be a primary characteristic of professors of educational administration. Under some conditions, complacence may be a virtue. With the problems currently facing administrator preparation, complacence is a curse. While we do not want to precipitate premature, superficial, for ill-conceived changes on the part of administrator preparation programs, we do want to convince those who have power over the preparation of school administrators, particularly those housed within the university, to begin a program of radical and considered reform.

On March 18, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration issued its report, Leaders for America's Schools. After nearly two years of meetings, research, and staff work, the twenty-seven member commission, consisting of a variety of prominent

leaders in the fields of business, government, and education, produced a document establishing realistic standards and challenging goals for the profession. While some the standards contained in the recommendations of the Commission are already in place in many school districts and universities across the nation, other recommendations set a new agenda for reform.

At least three ideas in the report strike me as having great significance and far reaching consequences.

1. The teacher is preeminent. Implicit in the Commission's discussions of the administrative role, is the notion that the teaching role is the key role in education. If teachers are to have greater responsibility and authority over teaching and learning, and the Commissioners endorse this idea, the administrative role will have to adjust in a reciprocal way. This is not to say that the role of the administrator will be diminished, simply that it will change, and change in the direction of providing support for the primary functions of schools, teaching and learning. Given the administrator orientation of the majority of the members of the Commission, their endorsement of teaching as the preeminent role was a rather bold and visionary move. It paves the way for experimentation with new teacher roles suggested in the Holmes and Carnegie Forum reports. It poses the possibility of teacher authority based on expertise rather than unionism, and of colleagueship between professional educators, regardless of their role.

2. Administrator preparation should be housed in professional schools rather than in colleges of arts and sciences. For most administrator preparation programs in this country, this recommendation constitutes a radical change in thrust. Today, many programs consist of theoretical courses and managerial or technical studies. The change to a professional school model would require that programs provide a strong intellectual background in education and organizational life, and build on that, guiding administrative candidates through closely mentored practice to independent practice. Those preparing to practice school administration would proceed through a program as a cohort. One of the goals of the program would be to socialize the cohort to values of ethical and professional service. It also means the reorganization and adaptation of what now constitutes the body of knowledge in the field of school administration. As an applied field of study, coursework, research, and mentored practice should all focus on problems of practice. These changes require a symbiotic relationship between schools of education and the public schools. They also suggest that, as in all other recognized professions, preparation and socialization take place before individuals begin to practice.

3. Preparation programs should be responsive to the concerns of both the profession and the university. To ensure an emphasis on excellence and relevance, practitioners and academics must cooperate in the reform of administrator preparation. The Commission found that many existing

preparation programs respond primarily to the market for students. Thus, institutions compete for students by lowering standards to increase convenience and accessibility. This criticism is especially directed to ersatz programs having no permanent physical location. Professional preparation programs is impossible under conditions of unsequenced course offerings delivered in disjointed segments and without careful monitoring for quality and relevance. These conditions prevail in mail-order and distance-education programs. Those universities having the will and resources should make their own programs clearly superior, but they cannot succeed unless the profession itself supports this drive for excellence by refusing to recognize or certify inferior programs.

While these three notions encompass a good deal of what the Commission report recommends, the entire list of recommendations by the National Commission is included at the end of this paper. The discussion of those items is included in the Commission's report entitled Leaders for America's Schools.

What would a preparation program look like if the Commission's recommendations were followed? First, we must we must come to some agreement on what it is school administrators should know and be able to do. I would argue that school administrators should know about teaching and learning, about life in organizations, and about people. A program for preparing individuals to administer schools should be housed in what we would call a professional school rather than a college of arts and sciences. Professional schools recognize as their

primary mission the preparation of individuals to practice. That does not argue for lack of rigor or standards. It does suggest that the course of study should be organized around problems and principles of best practice rather than around academic and research specialties of sociologists, psychologists, and other areas of scholarly endeavor. It also suggests that the preparation program should take individuals from the theoretical study of learning, teaching, organizations, and people, through clinical studies to mentored practice, and ultimately to independent practice. The need to socialize candidates to principles of professional practice and to assure their immersion in the critical issues and ideas of the profession, requires that candidates be prepared in cohorts. Recognized successful practicing administrators should be involved in several phases of this preparation, particularly clinical studies and mentored practice. University professors should also be involved throughout the entire preparation experience.

In general, candidates admitted to studies for careers in school administration should be very carefully selected and screened. They should be people well able to to communicate in both written and spoken word. They should be well versed in teaching and learning as well as the history and philosophy of education. The preparation program itself should school them in a theoretical phase focusing on organizational life, psychology, sociology and other academic subjects. Following the theoretical phase, clinical studies should introduce students to problems and best principles of practice. Case analysis and simulation should be a major process for introducing students to thoughtful analysis and clear thinking. Internship should be substantial, and should be combined with a weekly seminar at which problems

are raised and discussed in a colleagual environment by students, practicing administrators, and university professors. This kind of program is necessarily more costly than the type currently in place. Those universities unwilling to commit to an honest and relevant program of preparation for school administrators should get out of the business. In fact, the National Commission said that of the five hundred and five institutions offering courses in school administration in the United States, less than two hundred actually have the resources and commitment to provide the excellence called for by the Commission. (Leaders for America's Schools, UCEA 1987 p.23).

How does the current role of the university department of educational administration contribute to these problems and how might it be changed?

Perhaps the single most destructive trend affecting professional preparation in school administration during the last thirty years has been domination by an arts and sciences rather than a professional school model of education. The consequent failure to develop a sophisticated knowledge base for practice and the divorce of preparation from the school setting are, at least partly, the result of this domination. The school of education has been cast in the role of ugly stepsister of arts and sciences instead of taking its place with the other professional schools housed in the university.

At the major universities, domination by arts and sciences has tended to establish a single, narrowly construed research path to tenure. The junior professors' concern for review and renewal of the preparation program, for the development and supervision of the clinical aspects of administrator preparation, for overseeing recruitment

and selection, for instructional development and innovation, and for providing liaison with professional practice groups, has been wholly displaced by the single-minded pursuit of publication. Yet, all these would appear to be vital concerns of professors having to do with the regeneration of administrator preparation.

Clearly, a focus on research has been necessary during the last thirty years. The resulting corpus of empirical and theoretical knowledge has value for further research as well as practice. The extension of the knowledge base must continue to be a critical concern, but to strengthen departments and professors, attention must be given to the cumulative effects the neglect of curriculum revision, clinical experiences, and advisement can have on administrator preparation. A research oriented faculty culture can create a collection of individuals rather than a cohesive department. Faculty members work independently, have little need or desire to interact with colleagues or students, and the critical entity of faculty and students engaged in the study of school administration gives way to process without substance. The care of the preparation program may be left to the department secretary, and faculty members may concern themselves with the program primarily as reaction to university directive, legislative mandate, or market fluctuations in enrollment.

How might the vitality and intellectual climate of departments be enhanced? First, the notion of department leadership as temporary and reluctant service must be discarded as an anachronism. Departments are not romantically conceived clusters of eccentrics governed by benevolent anarchy. The creation of a dynamic, effective setting for the study of schools and the preparation of school administrators is

not a chance happening. Scholars who reluctantly serve as chairs are unlikely creators of the appropriate setting; election by peers does not often result in strong leadership. Departments preparing administrators need chairs who devote significant time to the programs of the department and constantly propose change, adaptation, and renewal. The preparation of professionals requires constant adjustment to changes in the relevant technology and to evolving notions of best practice, particularly in educational administration where the clinical knowledge base is in its infancy. For these same reasons, we would question the recent trend in schools of education to combine educational administration with other education areas in an artificial administrative unit.

Second, schools of education must stand with the other professional schools which argue that the university has a mission broader than scholarship; it includes the preparation of practitioner educators, as well as lawyers, architects, and doctors. The reward structure for professors under a professional school approach should reflect important responsibilities connected with professional life. Ultimately, roles in departments of educational administration need to be differentiated by both scholarly focus and responsibility for the many aspects of a professional preparation.

Specialties that depart radically from the arts and sciences scholar are appropriate for professional schools (Schein, 1972, pp. 139-149). Information specialists, for example, might be non-teaching professors concerned with student admission (recruitment, screening, assessment) as well as with testing and the student data system. The information specialist's research could involve program evaluation,

student data analysis, and the test consulting with colleagues. In other words, the research area would be directly related to program role. Field specialists might be concerned primarily with the clinical aspects of administrator preparation. They would supervise interns, run the intern seminars, and coordinate colleague and student opportunities for field problem solving. Their research might center on applied studies, the effects of administrator intervention, and case analysis. These professors might also teach field study methods, case analysis, and other clinical studies. Despite the nontraditional nature of these roles, all professors would be expected to produce new knowledge directly related to school administration or administrator preparation.

Third, the intellectual climate of the departments needs tending. The knowledge base of educational administration was borrowed from the theory and research of the social sciences. Unfortunately, it never evolved into a unique knowledge base informing the practice of school administration. Unlike medical research, which is often focused on specific problems of professional intervention (treatment), the research done by scholars in educational administration has followed the methods and organization of sociology. Like the sociologist, the researchers in educational administration have chosen to study schools and administration as they exist without examining the methods, possibilities, and consequences of professional intervention or standards of practice.

A knowledge base, organized around problems of practice, that includes administrative intervention and its consequences for teaching and learning, must be developed. This implies the embrace of new

research methods, information retrieval/display systems, and taxonomies of practice. Also implied are new partner relationships (schools and universities) for the collection, storage, retrieval, and analysis of information related to the practice of school administration. The traditional division between preclinical and clinical study might be abandoned (Hughes, Thorne, DeBaggis, Gurin, and Williams, 1973, p. 34). Contingent on these changes is the development of instructional materials, texts, and clinical learning opportunities consistent with the preparation of adult learners for the informed practice of school administration.

Technological developments require that professors rethink their primary responsibilities such as the dissemination of professional knowledge. Computers, and the network potential they afford, have important implications for what professors do, how they do it, and with whom they do it. Data about schools, new ideas about schools, and other kinds of information can be sent and received instantaneously and manipulated, displayed, and used in simulations of decision-making by a multitude of simultaneous users. The processes and content of new knowledge about school administration and knowledge about practice and intervention can be disseminated in unprecedented ways. Practitioners, researchers, graduate students, and teachers can be effectively linked together to pose and address the complex problems of schooling. The constraints of time and restricted information have been dissolved by technological advance.

Without abandoning the belief that professional preparation is, at its best, an intense, prolonged, and rigorous experience, we must push at the constraints and find new ways to deliver high quality

preparation to worthy candidates. Proceeding through programs as a cohort, students should experience the university community as dynamic, that is, professors should be there and be available; journal clubs, guest scholars, research projects and debate should be evident.

Colleges of education must work to restore a cadre of research and graduate assistants to the department. School districts must share responsibility for administrator preparation. Sabbaticals, paid fellowships, release time, and intern sponsorship are ways districts can assure themselves, and the profession, of a superior pool of administrator candidates. The revival and expansion of university study councils can provide relevant part-time employment for students within the university environment. Cooperative programs between the state department of education and the university can provide an enriched preparation program combining salaried responsibilities in the state department with continuous residency within the university. In short, aggressive efforts can win the resources to make administrator preparation a full-time experience.

Departments and schools must give new attention to the development needs of individual professors as well. Budget restrictions of the last decade have had a depressing effect on development opportunities as the professorate has grown older and less mobile. Travel to professional meetings and support for research, two of the primary developmental avenues, have all but disappeared at many universities. A combination of old and new approaches may meet current needs: services to improve instruction, sabbaticals, exchange programs, retooling opportunities, career development services, and fellowship programs.

In other professional schools, professors keep current by continuing to practice. However, unlike a professor of dentistry, a professor of educational administration cannot practice school administration intermittently. The business professor maintains currency by a consulting practice. With careful planning and university coordination, this approach might keep administration professors current and provide the additional benefits of creating university-district linkages and locations where students and professors can jointly study schools. We underscore the need for departmental sponsorship, assignment, and quality control of consulting activity.

New mechanisms are needed to stimulate and disseminate changes in research methods and focus. For example, an academy for the advanced study of school administration might bring together professors and practitioners for summer programs. The nation's top educational administration scholars could refocus research through the dissemination of new procedures for studying organizations and administrator intervention.

In summary, departments of educational administration are in need of structural and disciplinary adjustment. Most adjustments have to do with building and incorporating a knowledge base of administrative practice and formalizing rigorous clinical experiences as part of administrator preparation. In addition, the intellectual climate of departments requires rejuvenation for both professors and students.

In its concern for our fragmented profession, the Commission made recommendations to public schools, professsional organizations, universities, state and federal policymakers and the private sector. It pointed to problems and opportunities for change that each of these

social institutions might affect independently. However, a most significant observation by the Commission was the need for fitting the pieces of our profession back together. Without cooperation of all of those involved in school administration, efforts toward reform appear undermined and counterproductive. Issues of turf and tradition make it difficult to achieve cooperative reform.

The Commission argues that school administration is very important and that the selection and preparation of school administrators should be taken very seriously. It call for better administration candidates to experience relevant and rigorous preparation. It calls for the radical reform of university training as well as the reformulation of authority and responsiblity in the public schools. It calls for the universal refocus on the technological core of schooling, teaching and learning.

Shaking loose the ensconced traditions of university preparation and administrative practice will not be easy. It might be observed that the universities don't want to change, practitioners aren't organized to change, and the state legislatures and governors are empowered, but ill informed and ill equipped to change school administration. What is required is the coming together of all sectors of the profession for the purpose of defining school administration and then designing programs and systems to prepare people for those careers. This is a complex endeavor. Those who see the problem more simply delude themselves and would lead us through another round of superficial and simplistic reform.

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RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

The public schools should share responsibility with universities and professional organizations for the preparation of administrators.

School districts should design, operate and monitor programs of administrator professional development.

The public schools should have programs to recruit quality administrators from among their teachers.

School districts should have policies that specifically identify promising candidates for principalships and superintendencies among women and ethnic minorities.

Practicing administrators have an obligation to analyze their work and contribute actively to the development of its clinical knowledge base.

School districts should invite leadership from all parts of the community.

Secondary schools should encourage talented students to become teachers and educational leaders.

The profession should recruit intellectually superior and capable individuals to administrator preparation programs.

The profession should become involved sustantively in the preparation of educational administrators, especially in the planning, implementing, and assessment of programs.

A National Policy Board on Educational Administration should be established.

Administrator preparation programs should be like those in professional schools which emphasize theoretical and clinical knowledge, applied research, and supervised practice.

The position of educational administration program chairperson should be one of leadership with responsibility for program development and renewal.

Professors should collaborate with administrators on reforming curricula for administrator preparation.

The faculty of administrator preparation programs should have varied academic backgrounds and experience.

Professional development should be included in the performance reviews of professors.

Universities should fund and staff administrator preparation programs at a level that makers excellence possible.

The reward structure for professors should be changed to recognize curriculum reform, instructional innovation, and other activities in addition to traditional scholarship.

Universities should provide scholarships and other incentives to recruit able students and particularly those from ethnic minority groups.

Universities unable to accept the spirit of excellence described in this report should cease preparing administrators.

Each state should have an administrative licensure board to establish standards, examine candidates, issue licenses, and have the authority to revoke licenses.

Licensure should depend on the completion of a state-approved program, adherence to a professional code of ethics and, in the case of principals, teaching experience.

Licenses for educational administrators should have two tiers: entry level and fully licensed status.

Temporary or emergency licensure should not be granted.

A license should be issued for a specified time period. Renewal of the license should depend on successful performance and continuing professional development.

Licenses should be portable from state to state.

School administrators should be able to transfer retirement benefits from state to state.

States should supplement the cost of financing professional development programs for educational administrators.

Each state should develop policies for the recruitment and placement of minorities and women in administrative positions.

The federal government should fund a graduate fellowship program in educational administration for ethnic minorities.

Business, industry and the public schools should exchange specialized personnel to provide each other with relevant, useful information.

Foundations should support research and development programs focused on the clinical phases of preparation.

Businesses and industries should provide technical assistance to education agencies in the development of optimum uses of technology.

Foundations, businesses, and industries should provide fellowships for ethnic minorities to pursue preparation for school administration.

Business, industry and educational leaders should participate jointly in management training programs.